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## OFFICE OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Linda McCulloch  
Superintendent

January 16, 2003

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

This letter serves to update you on the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan (5YCEP).

First, I would like to tell you that my staff and I have been impressed by your dedication and hard work on your plans. I also want to recognize that you have concerns. Although needs and issues vary by district, the following emerge as what schools would like OPI to do and how we are responding:

**Assure the 5YCEP integrates federal and state requirements**

Recognizing the need to help districts avoid duplication and to effectively use scarce resources, the OPI Accreditation Task Force recommended to the Board of Public Education (BPE) a goal that all school districts develop, implement, evaluate, and revise a single five-year comprehensive education plan. The Board of Public Education adopted Accreditation standards that included the 5YCEP in November 2000. We have been praised for our efforts of designing a single plan as compared to many states that utilize a different plan for each state and federal requirement. The OPI staff planned a process that incorporated requirements of federal programs, such as with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) along with BPE requirements so that the 5YCEP would meet local, state and federal needs. Although school districts may certainly add any additional components to their plan, at my direction, the 5YCEP was simplified and contains only components required by President Bush's NCLB and Montana's BPE.

**Assist schools with plan preparation**

OPI is committed to helping in a variety of ways. We have contracted with several facilitators who are currently providing regional technical assistance across the state. Through this effort, participating districts are diligently working to complete the five-year comprehensive education plans. The OPI website houses the guidelines for the 5YCEP at <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/5YearPlan/index.html>. To simplify the process for school districts, OPI staff developed forms and templates for optional use. If you use a different format for any required components, please clearly mark each component. Also, the annual data collection system was enhanced to ensure that you have all the necessary information.

**Obtain flexible deadline**

I raised your concern regarding a May 2003 deadline with the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) at the November 2002 meeting. They adopted my proposed amended timeline as follows:

- All districts will submit their 5YCEP by May 1, 2003.
- At the time of submittal, a district may indicate component(s) of the plan that are "in progress" and provide an explanation.
- For districts that had components "in progress", the final completed 5YCEP version will be due in October 2003 to coincide with OPI's Annual Data Collection (ADC) deadline.

**Explain how the plans will be assessed**

I have directed my staff to develop a peer review process for reviewing completed plans utilizing the excellent experience of Montana's educators in the field. I would like to hear your ideas about how this process should be designed.

Although the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan (5YCEP) may seem daunting at times, we need to continue to work together to provide the high quality education that our citizens have come to expect and our Montana educators consistently deliver. As Bob Barnes, Park City School District Superintendent and 5YCEP facilitator, conveyed to me, "The value of the 'Five Year Plan' is allowing the schools and community to take a snapshot of where they are and make plans for where they want to go."

If you have any questions or concerns with the information in this letter, do not hesitate to contact my staff or me. You may reach Al McMilin by telephone at (406) 444-3128 or by e-mail at [amcmilin@state.mt.us](mailto:amcmilin@state.mt.us) and Linda Vrooman Peterson at (406) 444-5726 or [lpeterson@state.mt.us](mailto:lpeterson@state.mt.us).

It is with great pride that I continue to focus my work, with your help, promoting support for high quality education in our state.

Sincerely,

Linda McCulloch  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Attachment:

Guidelines for Accreditation Review and Assistance Process Supporting the Five-Year Comprehensive Education Plan Development (10.55.601 ARM) Revised December 2002  
<http://www.opi.state.mt.us/PDF/5YearPlan/5YCEPGuide.pdf>